

News Release



Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
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Fish and Wildlife Service Reopens Comment Period on Selkirk Mountains Woodland Caribou Critical Habitat Proposal

*Information meeting and public hearing scheduled for April 28, 2012
Comment period ends May 21, 2012*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today that the public will have an additional 60 days to submit comments regarding the agency's proposed critical habitat designation for the southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou, an endangered mammal known to occur in Idaho, Washington and British Columbia, Canada.

Idaho's Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, and Boundary County, Idaho, asked for an extension to the comment period and additional opportunities for citizens to participate in public processes regarding the proposal.

"We recognize the public's interest in this issue and will work together to help citizens fully understand our proposal to designate critical habitat for caribou," said Brian Kelly, the Service's State Supervisor for Idaho. "We also seek to gain as much information as possible from all interested parties which we will use to inform our final decision."

The Service is re-opening the public comment period on the caribou proposal for 60 days, until May 21, 2012.

Interested citizens are invited to attend a Service-hosted information meeting on Saturday, April 28, 2012 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Citizens will have an opportunity to learn more about the proposal by talking with Service biologists and managers at this information meeting.

The same day, a public hearing will be held from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. so that citizens will be able to provide formal oral comments for the Service to review and consider for its final decision. Speaker registration will begin at 1:00 p.m.

The information meeting and hearing will be at Bonners Ferry High School, 6485 Tamarack Lane, Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805. The Service and Boundary County worked together to determine an adequate date and location to accommodate most citizens' schedules, which is the reason for a weekend event.

Persons with disabilities needing reasonable accommodations to participate in the public meeting or hearing are invited to contact Cathy Rogers at 208-378-5387, cathy_rogers@fws.gov, or 503-231-6263 (TTY). Reasonable accommodations requests should be received at least 3 business days prior to the meeting to help ensure availability; 2 weeks notice is requested for ASL/ESL interpreter needs.

The Service will continue to work closely with Idaho's Boundary and Bonner Counties, and Washington's Pend Oreille County, to coordinate information-sharing with citizens on this proposal, including why we are designating critical habitat for the species and what this means for land-use activities in the area. Similarly, the public will be able to provide us with data, as well as share their concerns on the proposal, which will be used in forming our final decision.

All oral comments will be entered into the official public record. If time does not permit full oral testimony, the public is encouraged to bring written testimony for incorporation into the record.

The Service will open an additional 30-day public comment period during the economic analysis phase of the proposal, which will occur later this spring. When the final details are arranged, the Service will notify the public about this comment period, and information meeting and public hearing details.

In all, the three comment periods will provide citizens a total of 150 days to engage in public processes.

The Service is proposing to designate 375,565 acres of critical habitat in Idaho and Washington for the caribou. These lands are all currently considered to be occupied by the species and no exclusions or exemptions are proposed.

Please submit comments and other information only by one of the methods listed below.

- *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keyword box, enter Docket No. [FWS-R1-ES-2011-0096], which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Send a Comment or Submission."

Please note that if you are using the Federal eRulemaking Portal, the deadline for submitting an electronic comment is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the closing date.

- *By mail:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2011-0096; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

We will post your entire comment – including personal identifying information – on <http://www.regulations.gov>. You may request at the top of your document that we withhold personal information, such as your name, street address, phone number or e-mail address from public review; however, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing this proposed rule, are available for public inspection at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or by appointment during normal business hours at the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office (208-378-5265 or 509-893-8014). The proposed rule, maps and other information about the southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou will also be available online at <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants, and to date has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation, as well as promoting the recovery of many others. America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.